

United States Marshals Service



FACT SHEET Judicial Security

Ensuring the safe conduct of judicial proceedings, as well as protecting jurors, witnesses and federal judges and their staffs, is a principal function of the Marshals Service. The Judicial Security Division is composed of two teams — court security and witness security — that play an integral role in the federal judicial process.

Court Security

Deputy Marshals and contracted court security officers (CSOs) maintain proper decorum in courtrooms and provide security inside federal courthouses in each of the 95 federal judicial districts.

The Marshals Service protects more than 2,000 sitting judges and countless other court officials at nearly 800 locations where court-related activities are conducted throughout the nation.

In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of threats against members of the judiciary, U.S. Attorneys and other court officers. Explicit threats against the judiciary are first assessed by court security inspectors to determine the level of danger.

On average, approximately 200 threats against judicial members are logged each year — many of which result in round-the-clock protective details.

Marshals Service court security personnel provide



the very latest in state-of-the-art protective techniques and equipment in all phases of court proceedings, threat situations and judicial conferences — thus ensuring quick and safe responses in emergency situations as well as unobtrusive surveillance and protection during routine operations.

The Marshals Service administers contracts for approximately 2,700 CSOs — who secure building entrances at more than 360 court facilities in the United States and its territories. CSOs have detected more than 300,000 weapons.

Witness Security

The Marshals Service provides for the security,

health and safety of government witnesses and their immediate dependents whose lives are in danger as a result of their testimony against drug traffickers, terrorists and organized crime members.

Since 1970, more than 6,700 witnesses have entered the Witness Security (WitSec) Program and have been protected, relocated and given new identities by the Marshals Service.

The successful operation of this program is widely recognized as providing a unique and valuable tool in the government's war against major criminal conspiracies and organized crime. Since the inception of the program, an overall conviction rate of 89 percent has been obtained as a result of protected witnesses' testimonies.

Final determination that a witness qualifies for WitSec protection is made by the U.S. Attorney General. The decision is based on recommendations by U.S. Attorneys assigned to major federal cases throughout the nation. In a state case, the determination is based on a request from the state attorney general through the appropriate U.S. Attorney's office.

After a pre-admittance briefing by Marshals Service personnel, the witness and his immediate family members are usually relocated to a safe, secure area selected by the Marshals Service. Witnesses and their families typically get new identities with authentic documentation. Housing, medical care, job training and employment can also be provided. Subsistence funding to cover basic living expenses is also provided to witnesses until they become self-sufficient in the relocation area.



The Marshals Service provides 24-hour protection to all witnesses while they are in threatened environments — which include pretrial conferences, trial testimonies and other court appearances.

Organizationally, the program is operated from three levels — Marshals Service headquarters, 12 regional offices and metro units which have a WitSec inspector to provide assistance to witnesses and advise the local Marshal on witness security matters. A recent study found that less than 10 percent of protected witnesses with criminal histories are arrested and charged with crimes after joining the program.

In both criminal and civil matters involving protected witnesses, the Marshals Service cooperates fully with local law enforcement and court authorities in bringing witnesses to justice or having them fulfill their legal responsibilities.

The WitSec Program was established in 1970, and later amended in 1984.

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